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SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR WORKING
CANADIANS - TOWARDS A NATIONAL
STRATEGY

R.J. Adams

Skill Development Leave Task Force

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Background Paper 2

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR WORKING CANADIANS - TOWARDS A NATIONAL STRATEGY

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March 1983

This is one in a series of background papers prepared for the Task Force on Skill Development Leave. The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Task Force or the Department of Employment and Immigration.



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I INTRODUCTION

In June of 1979, the Commission of Inquiry on Educational Leave and Productivity, which I chaired, issued its report, Education and Working Canadians.¹ The report contained an analysis of the Canadian training system and offered several recommendations which together formed a comprehensive and interrelated educational leave package. It was the judgement of the Commission that, should all of the recommendations be accepted and carried out, Canada would be in compliance with the educational leave recommendation of the International Labour Organization. Indeed, one of the recommendations of the Commission was that Canada take the steps necessary to comply with the ILO recommendation.

Since the publication of the report, other studies have gathered additional information and have further analysed many of the issues addressed by the Commission.² All of these studies have made some reference to the desirability of establishing an educational leave policy.

In the fall of 1982, the Minister of Employment and Immigration appointed a Task Force on Skill Development Leave to propose a long term leave strategy. The purpose of this paper, prepared at the request of the Task Force, is to reconsider the analysis and recommendations of the Educational

Leave Commission in light of the more recent research and debate.

II CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

The term "educational leave", although it has an intuitively apparent meaning, tends to be misunderstood. The most widely utilized definition of educational leave is that developed by the International Labour Organization: "leave granted to a worker for educational purposes for a specified period during working hours."³

By this definition, an educational leave incident would consist of an employed person participating in an educational program during what would otherwise have been regular working hours. The term includes leaves of absence for educational purposes where employees are gone from work for extended periods of time, ordinarily to participate in regular post-secondary programs. But it also includes incidents whereby individuals leave the job to participate in education for some part of a given day (day release) or for a few days a week (block release). Thus, employees who are permitted by their superior to attend a course held in the late afternoon would be formally defined as "on leave", although it is unlikely that they would consider themselves to be on leave.

Educational leave is a technique potentially valuable in addressing training problems encountered by employed people.

However, since it is only one of many available techniques, it makes little sense to contemplate educational leave strategies in isolation. Educational leave is potentially one element of National training policy and it must be assessed against its capacity to make more probable the achievement of training policy objectives.

In its recent report, the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission Task Force on Labour Market Development indicated several objectives of National training policy.⁴ The training system should contribute to:

1. High employment by increasing the employability of Canadians and by alleviating skill bottlenecks.
2. Stability by relieving skill shortages and other structural problems of the labour market.
3. Economic growth by raising the productive capacity of the labour force and by reducing labour constraints on output.
4. Equity by providing to all Canadians the opportunity to develop skills for entry into the full range of occupations.

At present there is no formal Federal policy regarding educational leave. However, several Federal programs do, incidentally, promote the use of leave from work. For example, apprenticeship schemes often require trainees to spend part of their programs studying full time in educational institutions and the Federal government underwrites much of the cost of such periods. Under the general industrial training program, the Federal government provides financial assistance

to employers who agree to establish training programs. Educational leave is often part of such programs. For the past several years, Labour Canada has provided assistance to trade unions to allow them to train active members to be more effective in their roles. Much of the grant money has been used to underwrite time off from work to participate in union training.

In short, the Federal government already has an educational leave policy of sorts in place but it is a policy which has developed without serious thought. The present task is to consciously develop a policy which is most likely to add to the attainment of the standards noted above. To arrive at such a policy, it is necessary to review the training problems faced by working Canadians and the nature of the training (and educational leave) policy framework currently in place.

III TRAINING PROBLEMS OF ADULT CANADIANS

Research carried out by the Commission (and by other investigations) indicated several adult training problems which might be effectively addressed by the development of an educational leave strategy. There was a problem of occupational underqualification. Many adult Canadians had received no comprehensive portable training and thus they lacked both upward and vertical mobility. There was a problem of skills maintenance. Many Canadians who had received a good comprehensive occupational education were experiencing difficulties keeping their skills up to date. There were also a few groups the Commission isolated for special attention: adult functional illiterates whose educational handicap was a severe personal and social problem and trade unionists whose need for training has expanded significantly with the growing complexity of the industrial relations system. Another group who have specific identifiable training problems are managers, especially those who make a transition from some other job into a managerial position.

There are essentially four ways in which the Federal government may (and does) address the training problems of employed Canadians. First, there are policies designed to encourage employers to make training opportunities available

to groups in need of training. The industrial training program of CEIC is of this sort. Second, Federal policy may be aimed at educational institutions. For example, established program financing is designed to make post secondary education equitably available across the country and the institutional training program has the effect of influencing colleges to offer training designed to enhance the employability of those trained—the unemployed primarily. Third, Federal policy may be designed to assist adults directly. Counselling and the placement of individuals in college training programs are of this sort. Finally, Federal policy may be designed to assist institutions such as trade unions to meet their needs. The Labour Canada grants program is of this kind. In the section that follows we consider a number of the groups these policies are intended to affect.

A—The Problem of Acquiring Occupational Skills

Although Canada has an extensive education and training system, a large number of Canadians never received comprehensive training for an occupation or career. It is impossible to estimate with any accuracy the per cent of the labour force which falls into this category but it is probably over 50%.

It is people in this group who are most prone to be displaced by new technology and to become a long term unemployment problem. Many of these people are grade school and high school dropouts but a not inconsiderable number have received

a college or university education. Many, if not most, people in this category are, when working, less productive than they probably could be with more well focused training. Many are trapped in dead-end jobs because they lack the qualifications to advance to positions with more responsibility.

These people are prime candidates for an educational leave initiative. To understand why the problem exists, it is necessary to review the nature of the education and training system which produced so many basically "unskilled" people.

A1x) Training at the Secondary School Level

The research of the Commission led to the conclusion that few Canadian youngsters received significant job relevant training at the secondary school level.⁵ Instead, the Canadian strategy for providing young people with occupational qualifications is to postpone significant occupational education to the post secondary level. In order to prepare for work careers Canadian young people go to college or university. The problem with this strategy is that some 70% of Canadians over the age of fifteen have no more than a secondary school education.

The "problem" had been noted long before the work of the Commission and has continued to be a focus of discussion and controversy since then. Many Canadians believe that the purpose of initial education is to prepare the whole person for life. Vocational training they believe should be done at

some other level or part of the overall system. Others, employers especially, believe that secondary school educators have a responsibility to provide young people with occupational skills so that they will be more employable and thus be able to contribute more effectively to production.⁶

Since the report of the Commission there appears to have developed a shift towards providing more of a vocational emphasis at the secondary level but no dramatic changes are evident. There can be little doubt that most secondary school leavers continue to enter the world of work with only minimal occupational skills. Although there may be marginal changes in emphasis in future, it is very unlikely that great changes will occur in secondary education because of the dual mandate which the secondary school system has been given. Recently Great Britain adopted the policy objective of providing all young people with vocational preparation for work. In practice, other European countries also have that goal. However, Canadian governments do not appear to be prepared to make any such commitment.⁷

These observations are important because they have implications for the development of an educational leave policy. If the majority of secondary school leavers entered the labour market with significant skills then there would be less need for a policy designed to allow adults access to programs providing occupational qualifications. Since education is a provincial responsibility, there is little that the Federal

government may do to directly influence the nature of secondary school programs. However, if there is no significant expansion of occupational education at the secondary level, then a continuing need will exist to expand such opportunities to working adults.

A2x) Training at the Post Secondary Level

In Education and Working Canadians the Commission noted that most comprehensive initial training was provided by post secondary institutions, colleges and universities primarily. In general university educators consider the university to have a much broader role than fulfilling the skill needs of industry. Some even hold that labour market training is (or should be) outside of the mandate of the university.

In fact, however, the large majority of students go to university in order to prepare for careers and recent research indicates that in most disciplines the majority of graduates find work that is related to their course of studies.⁸ Regardless of the view of university spokesmen, universities in our society do provide the basic training ground for entrance to most highly qualified occupations. Certainly the university is much more than a vocational training institution but in one respect is precisely that.

When viewed as a system of vocational preparation Canadian universities typically get very high marks in terms of the quality of graduates. There has been and continues to

be, however, a problem of imbalance between the qualifications of university graduates and the demands of the market for highly qualified people. There is, for example, very little demand at present for the occupational qualifications possessed by graduates who have concentrated their studies on history and english. During the years when the baby boom era was making its way through the school system, graduates with such degrees could (and very often did) go into secondary school teaching. Today there is a greatly reduced demand for such teachers.⁹

A good deal of confusion exists in analysis of the university graduate in the labour market. Economists tend to aggregate all university graduates into a single "highly qualified" category and to classify any graduate not employed in a job requiring a university degree as underemployed.¹⁰ They do so because many employers require candidates for managerial and administrative jobs to possess some university degree. In classifying all degree holders as "highly qualified" professional economists accept the implicit judgement of industry that someone with a degree is necessarily more highly qualified than someone without a degree regardless of the substance of the education represented by the credential. However that assumption is not borne out by research which shows that there is often little relationship between level of education, as such, and job performance. In fact, many university graduates are not at all "highly qualified". A

graduate with a bachelor's degree in philosophy would not qualify for the position of philosopher. To reach that status one is expected to complete the requirements for a Ph.D. degree and/or to publish an original philosophical work. It is a bit absurd that a philosophy graduate who is able to acquire a management trainee job requiring any university degree is classified as fully employed, while another philosophy graduate who is able to find only a job waiting tables is underemployed. In fact, the substantive "training" has little to do with either job.

The point of this tangent is that many university graduates, whether or not they fill jobs requiring a university degree, enter occupations for which they have few or no substantive qualifications. Just as the secondary school leaver, they are in a position where they must acquire occupational qualifications. They may possess general abilities less in evidence among non-graduates but they are substantively no better qualified than those with much less formal education.

In addition to preparing graduates for work careers, universities are also major centres in democratic society of free inquiry and discourse. Because it is essential for a healthy democratic society to maintain such independent centers universities are established as institutions independent from political decision making. Governments cannot, and should not, dictate the nature of university programs.

Instead, government policy makers must seek to influence universities by way of rational argument and by judicious use of funding.

Although they have come in for much criticism, universities have not been unresponsive to the needs of the labour market. For example, business and engineering programs have expanded considerably in recent years.¹² However, it is very likely that many university graduates will continue to enter occupations for which they have little or no qualifications. That group is another candidate for the application of an educational leave strategy.

Unlike the universities, there has not been much controversy over the role of the colleges. In all of the provinces a major function of the colleges is to provide students with occupationally relevant qualifications. Moreover, since the colleges are not usually considered to be independent centers of inquiry, governments have been less reticent to involve themselves in their internal affairs. Like the universities, however, the colleges during the 1960's turned out many graduates with qualifications in little demand. In general, the higher regard in which Canadian society holds general over vocational education had its impact on college planners just as it had its impact on educators at the secondary school and university levels. In Ontario, for example, the colleges of applied arts and technology were established specifically

to train for occupational careers. Over the years, however, general programs expanded at a much faster rate than did technical programs.

A major part of college income flows directly from the seat purchase policy of the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission. Each year the Provincial offices of CEIC purchase blocks of seats from colleges in various labour market related programs. Over the years, many colleges have grown dependent on the influx of CEIC funds. Programs have tended to take on a permanent character whether or not they were still relevant to the current demand for skills. Since a major objective of Federal training policy was to reduce the level of unemployment, many unemployed people were placed in courses regardless of the probability that they would be able to find related jobs upon graduation.¹³ Since the late 1970's CEIC policy has been to achieve a closer fit between supply and demand in regard to skills. Towards the achievement of that goal, a New Occupational Projection System has been developed to identify future occupational demand. The system makes use of both quantitative data as well as qualitative inputs from parties familiar with the operation of local and occupational labour markets. Data from the national projection system will be combined with data from other sources to form a base from which joint Provincial-Federal training needs committees will negotiate annual CEIC expenditures for training. However, in order not to disrupt too greatly

programs in place, yearly variation in Federal expenditures will be restricted. For example, the Ontario-Canada training agreement provides for a maximum 5% reduction in spending in 1983-84 as compared to 1982-83 and a maximum 10% reduction in 1984-85.¹⁴

These new changes may result in a closer mesh between the products of the college system and the demands of the labour market. No doubt, however, there will inevitably be many college graduates who must accept positions for which they have few or no qualifications.

At the post secondary level it is necessary in our society to tolerate a certain amount of mismatch in order to provide a degree of freedom of choice to the individual. An aspiring and talented actor, for example, should not be forced to abandon his ambition because competition for acting jobs is stiff. On the other hand, society cannot be expected to underwrite the education of every aspiring actor.

One may estimate very roughly that about 80-90% of secondary school leavers, 35-40% of university graduates and perhaps 20-25% of college graduates leave school and enter jobs for which they have little or no training.¹⁵ These people are prime candidates for educational leave in order to secure the training necessary to perform in their jobs at a high level of efficiency and effectiveness and in order to acquire the skills necessary to advance to jobs more demanding than those entered initially after leaving school.

A3x) Training in Industry

One result of the observations noted above is that a large number of young people enter the world of work without job relevant skills or with qualifications for which there is very little demand. Nevertheless, the majority of these people do manage to find jobs. What apparently happens is that employers hire these "unskilled" people and provide them with the minimal amount of training necessary for them to do a specific job. Industry does very little comprehensive training leading to portable occupational qualifications. This observation has been confirmed by several research studies.¹⁶ In order to encourage industry to train the Federal government has had training incentive programs in place since the 1960's. One long term objective has been to induce a large percentage of employers to get involved in training. However, the relative consistency in the quantity of training by industry over the past two decades indicates that any impact which the program may have had on the overall involvement of business enterprise in training has been very small.

Educational leave is an incidental result of the industrial training program. For example, in 1980-81, of 42,028 contracts, 11,545 consisted of training which combined on-the-job experience with vestibule/classroom training during working hours.¹⁷ Another 3,647 contracts consisted of programs in which the trainees engaged in training full time during working hours. The remainder of the contracts (28,836)

consisted of on-the-job training exclusively. When negotiating contracts with employers achieving the objectives of the program is paramount and the particular methods of doing so are of lesser consequence. However, one objective of the industrial program is to provide trainees with portable skills and, in general, trainees are more likely to acquire portable skills through the combination of on-the-job and classroom training rather than through on-the-job training alone. Thus, CEIC does favour training programs which have an element of classroom training over those which are strictly on-the-job. In doing so it supports and encourages educational leave.

In response to the skilled trades crisis of the 1970's several new initiatives were taken. Companies who wanted to recruit skilled workers from abroad were required to make a commitment to skills training in future. To address the shortage of specific skilled workers (eg. tool and die makers) a program of enriched financial incentives (Critical Trades Skills Training Program) was developed in 1978. The objective of the program was to train 10,000 highly-skilled workers annually. In 1981-82 approximately 5,500 new people began training in the program.¹⁸ A typical element of apprenticeship, the method whereby certain highly skilled workers are usually trained, is block release from work so that the apprentice may attend class full time to study the theoretical aspects of the trade. CEIC supports these block release periods by

providing trainees with either unemployment benefits or training allowances during the block release period.

To prevent the occurrence of future crises, CEIC developed the Canadian Occupational Projection System, noted above, which is designed to project the supply and demand for occupations three to ten years in the future so that action may be taken in the present to prevent imbalances developing. CEIC has also signed Human Resource Planning agreements with several trade associations under which the associations agree to encourage their members to engage in Human Resource planning and if called for to establish and maintain training programs.

Some research during the 1970's indicated that many employers who were experiencing difficulties finding workers with appropriate skills still did not turn to CEIC for help to establish a training program because they did not want to deal with the requisite "red tape".¹⁹ For example, in order to acquire CEIC funds employers must agree to keep detailed records of expenses, to hire trainees from Canada Employment Centers if trainees are to be hired, to consult CEIC before firing a trainee and to advise if a trainee quits, and to consult with the union (if there is one) and the Provincial authorities. In order to acquire support, employers must convince CEIC that the required skills are not available on the market, that the terms and conditions of employment are not below standard, that they wouldn't train in the absence of the

CEIC support, that the training will provide transferable skills and that no support is already being provided from other sources.²⁰ From a public perspective, these are reasonable and prudent requirements but from an employer perspective they appear to be a potential maze in which time and effort may be wasted to no positive end. Under the New Training Policy, the Federal government is committed to reduce the red tape. For example, a plan is being developed whereby an employer may be reimbursed on a flat per diem basis rather than for each item of expense.²¹ It is difficult to see, however, how most of these requirements can be substantially changed without also reducing public accountability.

A4x) Training Policy and the Individual Employee

To this point we have tried to show that many young Canadians emerge from the formal system of education (both secondary and post secondary levels) unprepared for the requirements of the world of work. In response to the situation the predominant policy of Canadian business is to provide these "unskilled" workers with sufficient training to allow them to do entry level jobs at a minimum standard. From that point individuals are expected to acquire further skills and knowledge through on-the-job experience and through whatever training or education opportunities may come their way. Very few companies have systematic employee development programs available to all of their employees.

This situation has several negative results. Many Canadian working people are not as well trained as are their counterparts in other countries. In particular, Japan and Germany seem to place much greater emphasis on training in industry. The Commission on Educational Leave found that top German leaders from industry, labour and government consider the German "apprenticeship" scheme to be a keystone of one of the most successful economic systems in the world over the past four decades. The recent Labour Canada Task Force on Microelectronics reported that the average Japanese worker received two-and-one-half times as much training on-the-job annually as did the Canadian worker.²²

A large number of Canadian working people, and women in particular, are being underutilized because they lack the qualifications necessary to move upward in organizational hierarchies. No doubt this relative waste of talent results in a lower level of economic performance than possible. Because most of the training provided by industry is short term and job specific, the low level skills acquired are often not possible.

People possessing only specific skills are particularly vulnerable to the new technology (microtechnology, robotics, etc.) which is predicted to have an enormous effect on industry during the next few decades. It is very difficult for those with non-portable skills to find new employment and they are, therefore, prone to be unemployed for long periods. If

the rate of technological change continues at the present level or accelerates, as is predicted by some, then the problems of those with inadequate occupational qualifications will increase. Faced with this probability, policy makers have two choices. First, they may wait until redundancy becomes a fact and then develop programs to deal with the unemployed. Second, they may develop policies designed to encourage presently employed people to acquire skills which will make them valuable on the labour market and less likely to be a liability on the state. Implicitly, the first option is now in effect. Educational leave is a very appropriate technique with which to pursue the latter strategy.

The report of the Educational Leave Commission paid considerable attention to the impediments faced by working Canadians who would like to gain access to programs leading to portable occupational qualifications.²³ The primary providers of such programs were post secondary institutions but, in general, these institutions considered their major mandate to be the education and training of young people who were willing and able to attend on a full time basis. Post secondary institutions have little incentive broadly to innovate in order to make their programs more accessible to working people. Although one may note some innovations since the publication of the Commission report, it is not evident that any significant shift has taken place in the overall availability of post secondary programs to working people.

In Ontario there was a major review of continuing education in the early 1980's. As a result of that review the Ministries of Education and Colleges and Universities expressed their commitment to "ensuring that appropriate support and direction is provided for the part-time and short-term credit programs of the school boards, colleges and universities to meet the following needs of adults:

- basic education in literacy and numeracy
- attainment of a secondary school diploma
- development of vocational/professional skills and knowledge."²⁴

However, instead of providing the funding necessary to stimulate new educational initiative, universities and colleges in Ontario have been continually underfunded with reference to inflation.

A major review of adult education has also been carried out in Quebec. The Jean Commission recommended sweeping changes in Provincial government policy which have not yet been carried out.²⁵

In addition to influencing the programs offered by educational institutions public policy might also be designed to assist working people to gain access to the programs as they now exist. At present, Federal government training policy all but ignores this possibility. The industrial training program is designed to influence employers rather than to assist

individual employees who would take the initiative on their own. The institutional program is designed primarily with unemployed adults in mind rather than those who already have jobs regardless of the quality of the job which they hold. In 1980-81 of those who entered a full time program supported by CEIC, 88% were either unemployed or not in the labour force prior to starting the program. Over 50% of industrial trainees also were not employed prior to training.²⁶ Of those who were employed prior to entering a training program the large majority were women, special needs clients, natives, the employment threatened or new critical trades skills trainees. For several months during 1982 CEIC regulations precluded training contracts for employees who were not members of a special group. In short Federal training policy is not designed to address the general need of adult working people to retrain and upgrade throughout their careers. Instead it is designed to assist a very special clientele.

For all of the reasons noted above: a) the unwillingness of most Canadian employers to engage in serious training despite the availability of government financial assistance, b) the predominant emphasis of educational institutions on the needs of "traditional" students, and c) the preoccupation of CEIC with the problems of the unemployed and special needs groups, most employed adults find it very difficult to enter and complete the requirements of occupationally relevant post secondary programs. National policy is not designed to assist and

facilitate lifelong learning. The lack of such a policy has negative consequences for economic and social performance.

B-The Problem of Skills Maintenance

Because of rapid changes in technology and the state of knowledge, those who do receive a comprehensive initial education cannot expect their education to carry them through their entire career. Instead, continuous learning is necessary if qualified Canadians are to perform at high levels. The bits and pieces of evidence available to the Commission suggested that "considerably less than one-half of those with professional qualifications may engage in systematic professional upgrading." Evidence collected since then suggests that the estimate of the Commission was a reasonable one.²⁷

Canadian policy does very little to encourage continual upgrading. Various professional associations are accorded the right to regulate themselves but very few require their members to engage in continuing education. Under Federal training regulations there is a provision for assisting professionals displaced by technological change to retrain but no support is available for upgrading.

The present policy of the Federal government appears to be to allow the skills maintenance problem to be solved by some combination of market forces and Provincial government policy. However, available evidence suggests that those forces are not working with great efficiency to the probable

detiment of economic performance.

C- Into Management- The Transition Problem

The Commission report noted that most managers and supervisors in Canadian industry do not begin their careers as managers. Instead they begin in production, technical or staff jobs and are eventually promoted to managerial positions. However, it is widely recognized today that management is an identifiable profession which requires a set of special skills. Work in professional and technical jobs does not provide experience which is necessarily relevant to the practice of management. As a result, those promoted into management positions must engage in learning a new profession.

Many programs exist which are intended to help those promoted into management to make an effective transition. In large corporations considerable attention is devoted to management development. Organizations such as the American Management Association provide a wide range of courses for inexperienced or would-be managers. Through CEIC companies may acquire financial assistance to upgrade the skills of supervisors within the context of the industrial training program.²⁸ Additional assistance is available from the Federal Business Development Bank for small business enterprises.

Educational leave is a method widely used to deliver management training. A typical format is the two or three day seminar on a particular management topic. Master of

Business Administration programs often provide courses in "twilight" hours and new executive MBA programs require participants to attend classes for whole days at a time.

Despite all of these efforts the Commission found that there was a widespread belief that Canadian management as a whole did not perform as well as did managers in other countries. To address this problem the Educational Leave Commission recommended that an in-depth study be carried out on management education and management performance in Canada. Indeed the subject is so important that it is not unworthy of a separate commission investigation. As several commentators, as well as the Commission, have pointed out, Canadian productivity performance is directly related to the quality of Canadian management and economic growth is very closely related to productivity.²⁹

D- Functional Illiteracy- A Tragic Problem

The Commission report pointed out that for an adult to be able to function competently in our complex society requires mastery of basic reading and writing skills which usually take eight years of basic education to acquire. It also noted that over four million Canadians have a grade eight education or less. Although many adults who have less than grade eight are entirely literate, numerate and successful there are many who during the baby boom era were pushed beyond grade eight even though they had not mastered reading and writing at a grade

eight level of competency.

Undereducated adults are a labour market problem for several reasons. First, most of them have received very little vocationally relevant training. Since they left school before entering the secondary level, they received none of the vocational training available at that level. They do not qualify for most apprenticeship training or for other full time training in most instances. Second, because of the propensity of Canadian employers to utilize credentials (eg. degrees and diplomas) as screens, those without the credentials cannot qualify for good jobs even if they have the basic abilities to perform the job well. Third, because they are undertrained and undercredentialed, adults with short educations have very high rates of unemployment. They also tend to be highly represented among the discouraged workers who have dropped out of the labour force and tend to be overrepresented on the welfare roles. Because the jobs for which they do qualify tend to be, on average, more hazardous than jobs which are available to the better qualified, the undereducated are more prone to occupational accidents and occupational disease.

Both the Commission and the Allmand Task Force argued that a strong initiative was necessary to address this problem. However, instead of developing programs designed to effectively meet the needs of the undereducated, CEIC is in the process of phasing out the main programs designed for that client group. Thus, in 1977-78, at the time of the Commission

investigation, there were 43,960 trainees in the combined BTSD, BJRT and WAT programs.³⁰ In 1980-81, the combined total was 27,257.³¹ The new CEIC philosophy holds that basic education is a Provincial responsibility and it will provide basic educational upgrading only if it is part of a more comprehensive program of skill development.³²

Noting these developments, the Allmand Task Force commented that "the Federal government appears to have lost sight of its commitment and, more seriously, its duty to provide basic adult education to the illiterate of Canada." The task force went on to make several recommendations including the adoption of a ten-year National Right to Read Program.³³

Despite the highlighting of this problem, little effective action has been taken to address it. In a report published in 1979, Gary Dickenson, a leading expert on Adult Education, stated that "on any scale of national or provincial priorities, adult illiteracy does not even appear on the list."³⁴ Since the publication of Education and Working Canadians and Work for Tomorrow, adult illiteracy has been given more attention. The review of continuing education in Ontario led to a commitment to support programs of adult basic education in literacy and numeracy. The Jean Commission in Quebec also paid considerable attention to the problem and it argued that adult literacy should be given a high priority. It is probably fair to say that during the past few years literacy has made it onto the list of policy concerns.

However, no ambitious initiatives have been taken to rectify the problem. In Ontario responsibility for providing adult basic education has been shifted from the colleges, where it was often provided as part of a labour market mandate, to the public schools. There does not appear to be any intention on the part of the province to increase funding significantly. By reducing its commitment to adult basic education CEIC seems to have made the judgement that such education is unrelated to its responsibility for economic outcomes. That proposition is however unsupportable. Many thousands of Canadians are quite clearly underutilized because they lack basic skills and because they lack qualifications required by employers. More than likely the motivation of employers to invest in world class technology is dulled because of the availability of a large pool of people precluded from any but low paying jobs.

E- Trade Union Training

In Education and Working Canadians it was pointed out that trade union representatives have very important and extensive responsibilities in our society. They are expected "to know and understand not only the provisions of the collective agreement but also a wide range of labour and social legislation." Moreover as a consequence of our labour policy, unions, where they are recognized, must fairly and effectively represent both union members as well as those who choose not to become members of the union. Because it places such

responsibility on unions, government should also accept a responsibility to ensure that union representatives are accorded the means to fulfill their function. At present Labour Canada provides grants to central union bodies to support union education. Evaluations of this program indicate that it is functioning well.³⁵ However, considering the need the amount of the grant is small. Only a very small percent of Canadian union members are recipients of union training.³⁶

The Commission on Educational Leave recommended that union representatives "should have the legal right to take reasonable time off with adequate financial support to acquire the skills necessary to perform their functions competently." This is a right which is all but universal in the western democratic world. It exists in all of the countries visited by the Education Leave Commission; Great Britain, France, West Germany, Sweden and Belgium. The outstanding exception to the common rule is the United States. The high level of animosity which exists between labour and management in that country suggests that the United States model is not one to be emulated.

In many recent speeches Federal ministers have argued that the times call for a cooperative labour, management and government effort to solve our socioeconomic problems. However, for labour to effectively and confidently participate it requires both breadth and depth of knowledge and expertise. Thus, it is quite disheartening that the Federal government

has made no move to implement the Commission recommendation and that it only grudgingly renewed the institutional grant for labour education for one year in 1982.

IV POLICY OPTIONS

In this section several of the options available to the Federal government in shaping a long term leave strategy are discussed. First, we consider the option of introducing a legislated right to leave. Then we review the logic of the levy-credit scheme suggested by the Commission. We try to show that levy-credit combined with a few subsidiary plans represents a comprehensive strategy designed to bring about a major shift in the structure and process of the Canadian training system. Recognizing that levy-credit may not be politically feasible at present, we also consider some more modest steps that might be taken immediately to address the training problems of adult Canadians.

A. A Right to Educational Leave?

From the point of view of one charged with the development of a policy on educational leave, one obvious strategy would be to establish a universal right to time off work for education and training. Two of the countries visited by the Educational Leave Commission have established universal rights to educational leave—Sweden and France.³⁷ In Sweden employees have a legal right to time off sufficient to complete their course of studies. The primary responsibility of

employers is to reinstate leave takers in their jobs when they complete their studies. Grants are available to leave-takers from a special fund financed by a levy on industry. Otherwise, employers have no financial obligation to those on leave.

Having such a right to educational leave would be beneficial to Canadian working people. The fact that an increasing number of adults are returning to school full time despite significant financial and other barriers suggests that a general right to educational leave would be welcomed and appreciated by many.³⁸ Knowing the old job was there should they want it back would provide an underpinning of security which would no doubt encourage more working people to return to school full time.

Another model which Canada might follow is to provide employees with a right to educational leave for a specific period of time in order to participate in approved programs. This is basically the French approach. For example, employers might be compelled to provide leave to employees who were accepted into designated programs such as programs providing training for national occupations. In France, both employers and government participate in underwriting the costs (as does the employee in the form of reduced income).

A third model would be to provide employees with a certain number of days off with pay. Several German provinces have implemented this model. It would not be useful to allow

employees to gain access to traditional programs. However, such a right might prompt educational institutions to design courses intended to appeal to those with this type of educational leave right. In Germany the primary users of short term leave are trade unionists taking courses in union education and white collar and professional employees in search of continuing occupational education.

Research carried out by the Educational Leave Commission suggested that a legal right to educational leave would not result in undue hardship to employers. Both the international experience and the Canadian experience of enterprises which have established formal systems of educational leave provide guidelines for developing workable schemes.³⁹ In the typical formal system the employer may delay any leave if disruption of operations is expected and, in any case, need not permit more than a certain percent of employees to take leave at any one time. Available research suggests that employers could permit educational leave to up to two percent of their labour force without causing production problems.⁴⁰

The international experience also suggests that a right to educational leave would be of little value unless arrangements were made to ensure the continuation of a substantial amount of income to the leave-taker.⁴¹ The great majority of employees with the right to educational leave do not make use of it unless they are assured of income continuation. The same phenomenon is evident in Canada. Data collected by the

Educational Leave Commission suggested a direct correlation between the level of income support and the use of time off from work.⁴²

Income may be continued by way of government grants or by the continuation of salary or by some combination of employer, government and individual contributions. Using the model of maternity leave, individuals on educational leave might be permitted to draw unemployment insurance.

Although the evidence indicated that a right to educational leave could be introduced without the expectation of undue difficulty, the Commission did not recommend the establishment of a universal right for several reasons. First, employers were, in general, very much opposed to the establishment of a legislated right to leave. This opposition appeared to be based primarily on a general principled opposition to government intervention rather than on merits of the issue itself. Indeed, several employers expressed the opinion that should a reasonable number of employees seek to go on educational leave it would cause few difficulties and, if only it were not legislated, many employers would probably be favorably disposed towards granting unpaid leave to deserving employees.

Second, the Federal government, for whom the report was prepared, could establish a right only within its own jurisdiction which encompasses a small part of the total work force. Such a right in the Federal jurisdiction would be more exemplary

than comprehensive. Nevertheless, the initiation of a Federal right would set up pressures towards the eventual establishment of a Canada-wide right.

Third, it was not clear to the Commission that the inability of employees to secure release time from work was a major barrier to the expansion of training opportunities. Since there were very few post secondary programs predicated on the availability of student-employees during working hours, it was hard to say how employers would react to employee requests for time off to attend educational courses. The relatively limited experience that was available suggested that employers generally might be willing to allow release time if it did not cost them anything and if it did not disrupt operations. Moreover, where there was agreement between the employer and the employee that the course would be valuable to both of them, then it was not uncommon for employers to permit short periods of release time with pay.

The very restricted use of educational leave was not due, for the most part, to employer unwillingness to grant leave. Instead, educational leave was not more widely used because neither employers, nor educational institutions, nor individual employees had given serious and systematic consideration to the utilization of release time to build programs relevant to the needs of working people.

B. Levy-Credit: A Comprehensive Strategy

Rather than colliding over the contentious issue of a right to leave, the Commission decided to frame a policy package which could be implemented by the Federal government and, if implemented, would have the effect of significantly expanding the availability of development opportunities to working adults. The total package consisted of a levy-credit training scheme, a training fund to which individual employees could apply, a registered educational leave savings plan, and a limited right to educational leave for specific employees under specific circumstances. The package also called for the establishment of an agency "directed by representatives from labour, management, education and government" to administer the new programs.

The principal instrument designed by the Commission to expand opportunities to working people to acquire occupational qualifications was a levy-credit scheme. All Canadian employers would be required to spend 0.5% of payroll on training leading to degrees, certificates or diplomas or they would forfeit that amount as a training tax.⁴³ If they spent the amount required on appropriate training, they would be permitted a tax write-off which would in effect result in government participation in the costs of training. Both public employers and private sector firms not in a profit position might be able to qualify through either a negative

tax or a grant plan.

This scheme was designed to address Canadian problems while avoiding the difficulties encountered by other countries which have experimented with levy schemes. It was based on certain principles and expected outcomes. The first principle was that employers, rather than government, should be expected to accept the prime responsibility for training. The Commission noted that the French had recently passed legislation specifically pointing to the training responsibility of industry. It was apparent that the countries which had not been so explicit as the French had, nevertheless, adopted the same general principle—Germany and Great Britain are examples as is Japan. It seemed to the Commission that the principle was both morally and practically sound.

The Commission agreed that not only employers, but also employees and society as a whole would benefit by more effective training and thus all three should contribute. However, it was the judgement of the Commission that in the long term, the training problems noted above were likely to be effectively resolved only if industry was to become determined to resolve them. The Commission also concluded that neither market forces nor government intervention in the form of optional grants had been very effective in the past in significantly increasing the commitment and involvement of industry in training. Other than a training levy no mechanism came to the attention of the Commission which appeared to be likely

to significantly change employer behaviour in regard to training. In short, to bring about a major shift in industrial training (e.g. 60% of employers involved instead of 20%), something dramatic was required and the levy scheme was ideally suited to the purpose.

A second principle was that bureaucratic procedures and paper work should be avoided to the greatest extent possible. The British training levy plan floundered badly in the wake of a bureaucratic system and the Canada Manpower Industrial Training Program also was less effective than possible because of the necessity of CEIC to establish and to monitor standards of performance. Research suggested that rather than be subject to bureaucratic monitoring many employers shied away from CMITP.

A third principle held that those who benefitted from the training should contribute to the costs. Given this principle industry, government and trainees should all contribute. Business would gain as a whole from the expansion of training if Canadian industry became more competitive as a result. Canadian society would benefit by having a healthier economy and the trainee would benefit personally by being able to command more income. The Commission did not accept the implication of human capital theory which implies that employees should shoulder the entire financial burden of general training.⁴⁴ It should be noted that the philosophy of "who benefits?" was accepted by most parties who appeared before the

Commission including most representatives of the business community who recognized the advantages to industry of an improved industrial training system.

Fourth, the training should result in trainees acquiring portable occupational qualifications. This principle is not new but rather is an integral part of all government training support programs. To ensure that the training acquired under the scheme will be portable the Commission specified that the levy money could only be used to support programs leading to degrees, diplomas or certificates. This same objective could be achieved by requiring that each program be vetted and approved by some authoritative agent. This is essentially the system currently in effect in regard to industrial training. In order to acquire a CEIC training grant, an employer must convince CEIC that the following standards (and this is not an exhaustive list) will be met.⁴⁵

1. That he (the employer) would not have engaged in the same training if he had not received the grant.
2. That if trainees are recruited from the labour market they will be hired through the Canada Employment Centres.
3. That he will maintain accurate records.
4. That he will consult with CEIC before dismissing an unsatisfactory trainee and will advise CEIC if a trainee quits.
5. That the training will result in the trainee acquiring transferable skills.

6. That people with the skills required by the employer are not available on the local labour market.
7. That skilled people are not unavailable to the employer because he offers non-competitive wages and working conditions.

From a public responsibility perspective, these rules are reasonable and prudent but to the individual employer they appear to be a maze of red tape and many employers forego training grants because of them. The degree, diploma or certificate proposal would pass responsibility for ensuring quality from the government grant giver to professional educators. The proposal is based on the premise that legitimate educational institutions would not grant degrees etc., unless the recipients had received general transferable skills.

Fifth, that the quality of career training and education is likely to improve if representatives of organizations which will employ the skills acquired are involved in the content and delivery of the program. Educators, one step removed from the world of practice, may be prone to overemphasizing intellectually challenging theoretical issues unless their judgement is balanced by input from practitioners.

Given these principles, we expected the plan to have the following effects.

Colleges and universities would innovate in order to attract the new funds which had been earmarked for occupational education. One of the major problems that working people in

search of training and development opportunities face is that the most powerful and relevant programs are often offered only in a format convenient to the needs of young secondary school leavers. The availability of a new source of funds should stimulate educational innovation. In the report of the Commission several examples were provided which demonstrated how release time could be put to use to build comprehensive programs. At present colleges and universities have little incentive to expend scarce resources developing new programs for non-traditional students. If there is to be a significant shift in emphasis educational institutions need to be provided with substantial financial incentives to develop new programs.

The Commission proposal did not specify the programs on which the new levy funds should be spent. It was felt that to do so would introduce an unnecessary rigidity. As the Commission saw it industry was in the best position to decide the type of training and education it required and it could, therefore, best decide on which programs its funds should most appropriately be spent. If an employer wanted to spend the funds by earmarking them for college or university programs already in place then he should not be precluded from doing so.

The present scheme of CEIC under which it designates "national occupations" also could be put into effect. Instead of listing primarily highly skilled occupations, so

called highly qualified occupations such as accountant, engineer and research chemist could also be designated. Employers could be required only to spend the levy money training people for national occupations.

One problem with the designation process is that it assumes that an effective procedure can be developed whereby sufficient information can be gathered, aggregated and analysed in such a way that accurate designations on which all agree may be generated. However, past experience with top down forecasts indicates that such an optimistic outcome is not likely. It places too great a burden on centralized planning and decision making. Already, the interim designations of the CEIC have drawn criticism; there have been claims that some of the Canada Classification and Dictionary of Occupations codes are out of date.⁴⁶ After reviewing the foreign experience and especially after considering some of the criticisms of the British and French schemes, the Educational Leave Commission decided that a decentralized decision making process would be superior to a centralized designation process.⁴⁷

One major "side effect" of the levy-credit scheme would be to provide individual employers with an incentive to engage in human resources planning. In order for employers to spend their levy requirement wisely it would be necessary for them to, at least informally, engage in a forecasting exercise. Many would go beyond informal planning. Although not a primary

objective of the levy scheme the probable impact on human resources planning may be one of the most important. Employers who train, generally are of the opinion that the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs, while those who do not train presume that the costs probably outweigh the benefits.⁴⁸ If non-trainers could be induced to engage in planning exercises presumably many would come to the same conclusion as training firms. One of the primary barriers to the expansion of training may very well be the "bounded rationality" of non-trainers. In short, with limited time available they are unable to carry out the research which would convince them that training can be a sound investment.

The Commission realized that employers might spend the levy money on a small group of elite employees to the detriment of the majority. Collective bargaining, the Commission believed, would be the primary counter to that eventuality. A recent proposal by the Jean Commission in Quebec is relevant to this issue. Like the Commission on Educational Leave and the Allmand Task Force, the Jean Commission also recommended the implementation of a levy scheme similar to the one described above. That Commission also recommended the establishment of education and training committees at the enterprise level which would have control over the development of the levy money. The committees, which would be composed of an equal number of employee and employer representatives, would take decisions on the basis of a double majority. Impasses

would be arbitrable. Even more recently the Labour Canada Task Force on Microtechnology also recommended the establishment of universal committees (presumably modelled on health and safety committees) which would have a mandate to negotiate the implementation of new technology including the training implications of technological change. Like those proposed by the Jean Commission arbitration would also be available to these committees to settle impasses.

This new option would seem to be a very welcome addition. It would ensure that employees in both union and non-union establishments would be able to participate in the development of education and training plans likely to impact their future prospects as well as the prospects of the firm. For such committees to be effective, they would have to have the ability to submit impasses for binding decision to a neutral third party as recommended by the above reports.⁴⁹

Another predicted outcome of the levy-credit scheme is that it would create more competition between educational institutions and presumably would result in more responsive programs. As it now stands, the primary source of funds to post secondary institutions is government and thus negotiation over the use of funds is necessary between government and educational institutions. However, the main users of educated people are employers but employers have very little influence on the content and structure of programs because they do not directly "pay the piper". As a result, employers tend to

complain to government when they believe that post secondary institutions are not being responsive and to cajole government to put pressure on educational institutions to innovate. Thus government must act as a sort of go between, and as a very uncomfortable one at that, because government is concerned not only with the needs of industry but rather with the overall needs of society. Provincial governments must necessarily consider not only the vocational impact of education but also its impact on the whole person.

Thus, in order to more effectively influence the career-relevant aspects of post secondary education, it would seem sensible to remove the middle man and set in motion dynamics which would force the main but distant antagonists—business and education— together. This course of action might pose a threat to educational autonomy and to the viability of programs and functions not closely linked with careers if followed too far. However, most post secondary income would still be channelled through government and programs which have little connection to the needs of industry would be protected. Educational institutions which preferred to continue catering to the needs of traditional students exclusively would have the right to do so but they would have to forgo the new levy income.

The need to set in motion competitive dynamics has not entirely escaped Federal policy makers. Under the National Training Act, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission

may purchase training programs from non-profit organizations other than colleges. One reason for introducing this change is to set up competition between colleges and other non-profit training organizations in hopes of getting more response to programs. The levy scheme would accomplish this objective, we suggest, more definitely and certainly much more extensively than will the threat of funding non-profit organizations.

In addition to encouraging colleges and universities to innovate in order to attract the new levy money, the Commission also expected that the levy scheme would encourage employers in similar industries and/or geographic areas to form training associations. These associations could jointly utilize their training dollars in order to negotiate the provision of responsive programs with colleges and universities. These associations would differ significantly from those in Britain which developed into weighty bureaucracies because they would be entirely voluntary rather than established by law.⁵⁰ One might imagine employers regrouping periodically in order to meet the demands of changing technology and markets.

The levy scheme would not necessarily result in an increase in costs to industry or to the government. For example, government could set the tax write-off equal to the training costs of the employer. If it did so, then employers who spent the funds on relevant training would be even. Only those who refused to train would suffer a new cost. Since the levy money would be going directly into the colleges and universities, the Federal

government could reduce the transfer payments it makes to the provinces in order to support post secondary education. With provincial cooperation the scheme could be set up to provide real rewards to those institutions which demonstrated a serious responsiveness to the needs of employers and working Canadians and to reduce the income of those who refused to do so.

The levy proposal of the Commission is only one of several which have been put forth in recent years. Most of the others have been designed primarily to address the problem of periodic skill shortages. The Commission proposal, however, has more ambitious objectives. The intent is to set in motion forces which will result in a much greater commitment by Canadian industry to training and to bring about closer continuing relations between industry and educational institutions. Instead of a marginal shift in the profile of training in Canada, the objective is to bring about a major change in the system. To adopt the levy would be to put in place an entirely new training policy. Since 1979 the levy proposal of the Commission has attracted several supporters. It does not, however, appear to have been given serious consideration by policy makers. The Dodge Task Force documented the difficulties of the British Scheme but the Commission plan was designed to avoid the problems encountered in Great Britain.⁵¹ It is possible that policy makers have good reasons for not proceeding with the plan. If so, they should make them public.

C. Assisting the Individual Employee

The levy scheme cannot be expected to solve the occupational qualification problem entirely. The degree, diploma, certificate requirement ensures that employers provide employees with opportunities to acquire portable skills. However, under the levy scheme the initiative lies entirely with the employer. The Commission felt that policy initiatives should be taken by the government to encourage individual employees to undertake qualification training on their own. Two of the Commission's recommendations were directly relevant to this objective.

First, the Commission recommended the establishment of a vocational development fund. This fund would make grants available to employees who wanted to undertake a qualification program which would significantly improve their employment and career prospects. The Commission report did not go into detail about the recommendation but it was envisioned that it might work as follows. Individual employees, especially those who had not been the recipient of a sound initial qualification program, would be able to apply to an agency for a grant to cover a portion of educational costs and lost income. These people would have to have been accepted into a program likely to significantly improve their economic and career prospects. For example, in line with current policy, grants might be restricted to people wanting to train for designated

national occupations. Grants might also be made available only to those who can develop a convincing case that educational leave is necessary in order for them to gain access to the relevant program. For example, grant preference might be given to people who had to travel beyond commuting distance to the educational institution or to people whose irregular schedule precluded night study. Preference might also be given to people who had demonstrated their determination to successfully complete a program by taking as many relevant courses as their situation would allow.

The Commission also recommended that "individuals awarded benefits should have the legal right to take time off from work, without prejudice, sufficient for them to successfully complete the program of studies." Depending on the specific case, the individual might require anywhere from a few hours a week to several years.

The establishment of a separate fund would have a useful public relations function. Its creation would attract attention and would be symbolic of the commitment of the government to address the problems of working Canadians. A separate fund, however, would not be entirely necessary. CEIC could support individually initiated leaves through the auspices of the National Training Act, an option discussed in more depth below.

One problem with encouraging individual initiative is that it may imply a conflict between the employer and the

employer. Thus, if one assumes the levy scheme to be in place then one would expect the employer to utilize the levy money to train the employee. Most of those applying to the Vocational Development Fund would be employees on whom the employer had not seen fit to spend the levy money or employees whose training desires were not high on the employers' list of priorities.

Indeed, many employees are likely to find themselves in this situation if the levy plan is implemented. For example, women in responsible secretarial positions often find it very difficult to move into more remunerative managerial and executive positions in part because they lack the educational qualifications and in part because their managers are not anxious to lose their valuable services. Access to the Vocational Development Fund with its ancillary right to leave without pay would be a very valuable incentive to such employees.

An implicit conflict between the employer and the employee raises additional problems, however. If the employer does not approve of the leave or its purpose then he is not likely to make use of the new skills of the returned employee. Moreover, anticipating such a consequence, it is likely that most employees in a conflict situation would decide not to return at any rate. Those who did return might face discrimination from an angry employer. In anticipation of such an event, legislation would probably have to forbid discriminatory behaviour as

it does for employees who make use of their rights under occupational health and safety and human rights legislation. Furthermore, some appeals process would have to be made available to those alleging discrimination. In short, a legislated right would require the adjunct of substantial compliance machinery.

If not returning was the general experience then one would be entitled to wonder if the Vocational Development grant plan should be considered under the rubric of educational leave at all. It might be useful to have a plan which provides financial incentives for individual employees to undertake training but if the employees leave the employer and do not return, then it is not educational leave. The great benefit to the employee of having a right to educational leave is the knowledge that should the plans to acquire new qualifications go wrong, there is a job to which one may return. Many employed people will not give up a job for uncertain future prospects.

Another problem with the Commission recommendation is that it would be difficult to implement the "right". As noted in a previous section, the Federal government could clearly establish a right within its labour standards jurisdiction but for a Canada wide right to exist provincial co-operation would probably be necessary.

A second Commission recommendation relevant to the objective of encouraging employees to undertake qualification

training is the proposal for a Registered Educational Leave Plan. This proposal was recommended to the Commission by representatives of several different groups. The plan would be modelled on currently existing Registered Home Ownership and Registered Retirement Savings Plans. Individuals would be able to set aside money into a fund and the money would be deductible for tax purposes. When a sufficient amount of money was accumulated then the employee could take a period of time off work to participate in an educational program without suffering a significant reduction in income. For example, an engineer in the process of making the transition from a technical position to a managerial position might study for a Master of Business Degree at night for several years and then take nine months off from work to complete the requirements in a much shorter period of time than would otherwise be possible. This scheme would be a particularly appropriate way to encourage highly qualified employees to engage in systematic programs of skills maintenance.

While this proposal clearly envisions people taking time off from work it does not mandate a right to take time off. Instead it was suggested that government follow events and if it found that many employees are unable to make use of RELP funds because of the unwillingness of employers to grant unpaid time off then the option of introducing a right should be reconsidered.

The RELP scheme could be modified in a number of ways.

For example, in addition to tax relief, the government might also make additional grants available in order to encourage employees to train for designated occupations. Schemes might also be set up in such a way that they encourage employers to match employee contributions or to contribute on the basis of some other acceptable formula.

Perhaps the major advantage of the RELP scheme is its widespread acceptability.⁵² It does, however, have some drawbacks. First, it would be of real use only to those with sufficient income to be able to set aside a portion for future personal education. Many of those without portable occupational qualifications, probably a majority, would not be able easily to save. Second, the plan would probably encourage a higher general rate of saving than is presently the case. Since the Canadian savings rate is very high in international comparison it may not be wise from a macro economic perspective to introduce a new savings incentive program.

D. The National Education and Training Agency

To administer the recommended programs the Commission suggested the establishment of a national agency which would be directed by representatives from labour, management, education and governments. This recommendation was predicated on the belief that a cooperative endeavor controlled jointly by those who will be primarily affected is more likely to be successful than is an agency controlled entirely by government.

A similar philosophy has frequently been espoused by recent Federal government ministers. However, the Federal government seems to be unwilling to take the steps necessary to make the philosophy a reality. A joint proposal for a Labour Market Institute was made recently by the Business Council on National Issues and the Canadian Labour Congress. The institute would have a mandate somewhat broader but inclusive of that of the Leave Commission agency. The Federal government, however, has rejected the proposal.

E. Encouraging Educational Leave Under the National Training Act

As it is now administered the National Training Act does little to reduce the impediments faced by most adult working people desirous of improving their qualifications. However, with only minor modifications progress towards that end could be made.

First, as part of the New National Training Policy, a Skills Growth Fund has been created. It was designed primarily to permit training institutions to expand their physical capacity to train. The scheme also provided for the possibility of funding new curriculum and course design in conjunction with physical upgrading. In the first round of proposals received under this scheme (and approved early in 1983) there was not one request for financial assistance in support of curriculum upgrading or renovation.⁵³ While

physical upgrading is no doubt called for this new fund could be used in part to develop innovative course delivery techniques. The report of the Commission reviewed many of the recent developments in non-traditional educational delivery including a variety of schemes which made use of day release and block release. By making it clear in future communications that it wishes to encourage innovations which facilitate access of working people to upgrading opportunities and that it is willing to fund the costs of curricular reform CEIC could stimulate change.

Second, CEIC's industrial training program is directed primarily to employers while the institutional program is designed essentially for the unemployed. Through a shift in emphasis both of these programs could be made available to employed individuals committed to improve their occupational status. For example, CEIC's advertising could encourage individual employees, especially those in low pay, dead end jobs likely to be obliterated by technological change to apply now to CEIC for assistance to retrain for designated occupations. Employers who intend to replace people with new technology may have little or no incentive to retrain the people in advance. Indeed, one objective of the industrial training program is to minimize loss of employment as the result of technological change. However, in 1980-81, less than one percent of trainees in the industrial program were in the employment threatened

category.⁵⁴ It would seem that appeal to individuals is necessary if this objective is to be seriously pursued.

In order to meet the needs of those likely to be displaced CEIC might (1) survey employers in the region to determine the likely displacement effect (2) as part of either the institutional training program or the skills growth fund encourage education providers in the area to offer programs to which the job threatened people could gain access (3) provide incentives to employers to permit employees to attend classes during regular working hours.

The recent work sharing plan might be a good model to accomplish the third part. For example, employees enrolled in a CEIC upgrading program would be put on a four day work week. On the fifth day they would attend classes. CEIC would pay training costs (as it now does for full time trainees) and provide unemployment benefits on the same basis as it now does for those on the work sharing program.

A major problem which could occur under such an initiative is that employers might be reluctant to allow employees to take one day off per week. Hopefully, with the intervention of a CEIC counsellor most employers could be persuaded to make the necessary adjustment.

Another change that could be made in the administration of the National Training Act is to do away with the regulation which prohibits CEIC support to education which carries

university credit. This was put in initially to clearly differentiate between Established Program (EPF) Financing of higher education and CEIC funding of lower level labour market training. But this distinction no longer serves any real purpose. Many of the most appropriate courses for working adults are those which lead to university credit. For many of the best jobs employers require applicants to have university qualifications. Moreover, EPF is designed largely to support the education of traditional students rather than adults. CEIC should be given the flexibility of being able to purchase both college and university training so that it has leverage to influence the universities on behalf of adults in need.

It is worthwhile noting here that the capacity of CEIC to purchase training is substantial. For example, under General Industrial Training, CEIC may contract with employers to provide up to 1820 hours of training to each trainee.⁵⁵ 1820 hours is a lot of training time. It is possible to acquire a three year university "pass" degree in Ontario by attending approximately 1200 hours of classroom instruction. Students receiving four year degrees do not spend more than 1800 hours in class. University students do, of course, spend many additional hours in study and on class projects. However, in terms of hours of instruction CEIC could purchase each of its trainees a university education.

Given its capacity to purchase instructional time, CEIC

might make it known to various parties—employers, trade unions, employer associations and providers of education both public and private—that it is prepared to underwrite the cost of instruction for innovative programs which can be demonstrated to meet the needs of working people. In addition to providing funds directly to educational institutions as it does now under the institutional training plan and directly to individual employers as it does under the industrial training plan CEIC could (and should) solicit proposals from other actors either individually or as multilateral cartels.

F. Policy Options for Special Groups

There are two groups who are likely to be only marginally affected by the options discussed above—trade unionists and the undereducated. If the levy scheme were adopted then unions might be able to negotiate some proportion of the expenditure for trade union studies leading to certificates or diplomas. The labour college program sponsored by the Canadian Labour Congress and the trade union studies program offered by Niagara College in Ontario are two examples. However, most union training could not qualify for a tax write-off under the levy scheme. Moreover, union training would have to compete with job oriented programs and it is to be expected that employers will prefer vocational over union training. It is also to be expected that most employers will prefer to spend training dollars on those for whom the payoff

in terms of measurable productivity will be forthcoming in a relatively short period. There will be cases where basic education is likely to produce economic gains in a short period but more commonly the gains are not likely to be immediately apparent. CEIC has found that the returns on public investment in skill training at higher levels are substantially greater than are the returns to investment in basic education.⁵⁶ Because the short term payoff is likely to be uncertain only a small percent of the levy will be directed toward basic education. Furthermore, it is very unlikely that the under-educated will be able to take advantage of a RELP scheme because as a whole they have little or no discretionary income. Thus, for both of these groups special initiatives need to be taken.

Fix) The Undereducated

Because it was not expected that the other proposals would have a significant impact on the problems of the under-educated, the Commission fashioned a special recommendation for this group. It consisted of the following elements:

1. A special adult literacy fund financed from general government revenues which would have the power to make grants to underwrite the costs of literacy education programs.
2. A right to time off from work to those accepted into legitimate literacy training programs. Those on leave would receive the same pay as if they had been working and employers would be reimbursed from the fund.

The type of program the Commission had in mind might begin with organizations such as Frontier College which had special expertise in providing education to undereducated adults. The educational organization would contact employers who were known to employ adults with short educations. It would then sit down with the employer and the union (if the employees were unionized) and develop a mutually acceptable program. The Commission suggested that the approach to be taken should be similar to that taken to address the problem of employed alcoholics or drug addicts. Adult illiterates share many of the characteristics of those groups including a sense of shame regarding their condition and an initial unwillingness to admit to the problem. Employment-based alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs have been very successful and it was believed that the same approach could be successful in regard to illiterates.⁵⁷

Once the employer, union and educational organization had worked out a plan, a joint proposal would be submitted to the fund which would pay for both lost time and instructional costs. The Commission noted, with approval, the plan which had been developed by a group of Toronto firms (with some Federal government financial assistance) to upgrade undereducated employees. In that program the employees were permitted to leave work early in the afternoon to attend classes. The so-called Leaside Scheme could act as a model plan.

Although the Commission recommended the establishment of a separate fund, this type of approach to adult illiteracy could easily be fit into the structure of the General Industrial Training Plan.⁵⁸ Instead of applying to a literacy fund, applications would be made directly to the training sections of the Employment Centers. Grants could be given if in the judgement of CEIC the employment prospects of trainees were significantly improved.

Given the reality of credentialism, it is without much doubt that the labour market prospects of the undereducated would increase significantly if they could attain the equivalent of a grade ten or grade twelve education. Under normal circumstances 1820 hours of instructional time can be subsidized by CEIC and with that amount of time it should be possible to bring most undereducated adults up to secondary school levels. As already noted, a typical university student will not receive 1820 hours of instruction during a university career.

The second Commission recommendation— a right to leave in order to attend a basic education course— is more problematic. First, the Federal government could only introduce it within the Federal jurisdiction. Second, it would put in motion the adversarial dynamics discussed elsewhere in this report. It would, however, be a clear signal to employers that the government had decided to make a definite commitment

to address the problem of adult illiteracy and that it expected all good corporate citizens to cooperate.

F2x) Trade Unionists

As already noted the Commission recommended that "union representatives should have the legal right to take reasonable time off with adequate financial support to acquire the skills necessary to perform their functions competently." This strong recommendation was the result of the research carried out by the Commission in several industrialized countries.

Canada is a member of the International Labour Organization and as a member has a responsibility to give careful consideration to the recommendations of that organization. In addition to its general recommendation on paid educational leave, the ILO has also issued a special recommendation in regard to leave for workers' representatives. Recommendation number 143, passed in 1971, calls for time off without loss of pay or benefits for workers' representatives to attend trade union meetings, training courses, seminars, congresses and conferences.

In all of the countries visited by the Commission, governments have seen fit to pass relevant legislation. In France workers' representatives have a right to twelve days leave each year to engage in training relevant to their function. The leave is unpaid but, as in Canada, the French government provides subsidies to the unions to underwrite the costs of training. In Belgium the law provides for ten

days unpaid leave each year to allow employees to study social, civic and economic issues. To each leave-taker a per diem government grant is available. This law has been utilized primarily by trade unionists.

In Germany employees at the enterprise level are represented by works councils elected by all relevant employees. The councils have a legal mandate to oversee the implementation of social legislation and collective agreements as well as consultation and codetermination rights with management in regard to a specified range of issues. So that they may acquire the knowledge and skills to carry out their legal functions effectively and efficiently, German works councillors have a right to take up to three weeks paid leave during their two year term in office. New councillors may initially take four paid weeks. If it can be demonstrated that certain training is essential to the performance of duties then a councillor may take whatever time off that is necessary to the acquisition of the essential knowledge.

Although most works councillors are active trade unionists the councils have no direct link to the unions. Thus, the German unions have lobbied for the establishment of a separate right to time off for trade unionists. At the time of the Commission inquiry five of eleven German provinces had passed educational leave laws that had as one of their objectives an expansion of union training. These laws permit

from five to ten days per year of paid time off. Most of the users are trade unionists although a substantial minority of users are white collar and professional employees engaging in continuing education.

In Sweden, the Shop Stewards Act passed in the mid-1970's permits enterprise level union representatives to take employer paid leave of absence from work for whatever period is necessary to permit them to become competent to carry out their representational duties. Union courses last for from one week to several months.

Finally, in Britain a right to training leave for union officials was legislated as part of the Employment Protection Act of 1978. Union representatives were granted the right to "reasonable" paid time off during working hours to engage in union training. Disputes over the meaning of reasonable were to be settled with the help of the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

As already noted above, there are good reasons for introducing a right to leave for union training in Canada. The international experience suggests that few negative consequences are likely to result from such a right. In all of the countries visited by the Commission the schemes were working quite satisfactorily.⁵⁹

Even though its jurisdiction is limited, the Federal government should introduce the right to time off for union

training as a new labour standard. Any one of the five models outlined above might be appropriate. The Belgian and French examples would suggest the introduction of a right to unpaid leave complemented by a grant scheme. It is now possible under the General Industrial Training Plan to acquire assistance to upgrade the qualifications of personnel employed by trade unions. For example, if a union wished to upgrade the skills of one of its field representatives it could negotiate a grant with CEIC to pay up to 50% of the salary of the representative as well as the training expenses. This is a little known and little used aspect of the industrial training program.⁶⁰ CEIC would not subsidize the salary nor pay the expenses of a shop steward unless the employer was to make the request. Presumably unions could negotiate a plan jointly with CEIC and the relevant employer but again experience appears to be restricted.

Although the Federal government could use its present powers under the National Training Act to expand union training, the international experience suggests that a right to leave with pay, the simplest and most clear-cut way to encourage union training leave, could be introduced without much difficulty ensuing. Perhaps the most appropriate course would be to introduce a right to paid union leave in the Federal jurisdiction to indicate the commitment of the Federal government to union training. It should also publicize

widely the availability of funds for union training through the auspices of the General Industrial Training Plan in order to expand union education in other jurisdictions.

V CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The present task before the Federal government is to fashion an educational leave policy responsive to Canadian needs and conditions. An underlying assumption of this report is that the Federal government would prefer to establish policies in conformity with international standards if those policies are also responsive to Canadian problems.

A considerable amount of research carried out during the past half dozen years indicates that working Canadians have many problems which might be fruitfully addressed with further education and training. Education and training may be delivered in many different ways and the method most appropriate to the specific problem and context should be chosen. Thus, the problem is not to develop an isolated educational leave policy but rather to develop a general policy designed to address the training problems of working Canadians and to utilize educational leave efficiently and effectively as part of that policy.⁶¹

At present the problems of employed Canadians are low on the list of Federal priorities. Federal training policy is more concerned with the problems of unemployed adults than with the problems of those working. To the extent that it does impact the prospects and problems of the employed it does so only

at the margin. Despite a decade and a half of experience with Federal government intervention the overall profile of the education and training system as it relates to working people has not changed substantially. Although some of the problems experienced with the Canada Manpower Training Program have been addressed in the New National Training Act there is little reason to believe that the system will change significantly in future. Nor should major change be expected since Federal policy is designed only to impact the system at the margin. Canadian policy places primary reliance on market forces to generate education and training opportunities for adults.

It is an underlying theme of most recent reports that market forces and policy at the margin are not sufficient to overcome the existent problems. If both equity and productivity objectives are to be met then more robust policy initiatives are called for. The centerpiece of the recommendations of the Commission on Educational Leave was a Levy-Credit Scheme. Although the scheme drew on foreign experience it was designed especially with Canadian problems and conditions in mind. To adopt the levy plan would be to set out on a new path which of necessity would contain unanticipated dangers. Adopting the levy plan would be risky. However, if the education and training system is to be changed so that the problems of working Canadians are to be given serious attention,

something dramatic like a levy scheme is necessary.

Short of major changes, there are some modest steps that CEIC could take to improve the training opportunities of employed Canadians. Through changes in policy emphasis and administration the National Training Act could be made more responsive to the individual needs of working people. Without disrupting the present thrust of national training policy the Federal government could also introduce a Registered Educational Leave Plan, a right to leave for union representatives and special initiatives for the employed undereducated. Each of these policy initiatives would be a desirable step in the right direction.

END NOTES

¹ Education and Working Canadians, Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Educational Leave and Productivity, (Adams Commission) Ottawa, Labour Canada, 1979.

² Labour Market Development in the 1980's, Report of the Task Force on Labour Market Development, (Dodge Task Force), Ottawa, Employment and Immigration Canada, 1981; Work for Tomorrow, Report of the Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities for the '80's, (Allmand Task Force), Ottawa, House of Commons, 1982; In Short Supply- Jobs and Skills in the 1980's, Ottawa Economic Council of Canada, 1982;

In the Chips: Opportunities, People, Partnerships, Report of the Labour Canada Task Force on Micro-Electronics and Employment (Fulton Task Force), Ottawa, Labour Canada, 1982;

Adult Education in Quebec- Possible Solutions, Commission d'étude sur la formation des adultes, Montreal, Gouvernement du Quebec, 1981 and

Employment Impacts of New Technologies, Ottawa, Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, 1983.

³ For recent international development see Jean-Marie Luttringer and Bernard Pasquier, "Paid Educational Leave in Five European Countries", International Labour Review, vol. 119, No. 4, July-August, 1980 and Ian K. O'Malley, "Paid Educational Leave in Australia, Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom", International Labour Review, vol. 121, No. 2, March-April, 1982.

⁴ Dodge Report, op. cit., p.151.

⁵ Research on the situations in Ontario is reported by A.J.C. King, "Secondary School to Work: Difficult Transition", Interchange, vol. 11, No. 3, 1980-81.

⁶ T. Philip Adams, Address to the Conference, Meeting Canada's Manpower Needs: Whose Responsibility Is it? Toronto, Conference Board of Canada, November 25, 1980.

⁷ See "A New Training Initiative- An agenda for Action", Manpower Services Commission, London, England, 1981 and Policies For Apprenticeship, Paris, OECD, 1979.

⁸ W. Clark and Z. Zsigmond, Job Market Reality for Post Secondary Graduates, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 1981.

⁹ For further analysis see In Short Supply, op. cit.

¹⁰ This propensity is evident in the Dodge Report (op. cit.) and in most labour market reports published by CEIC and Statistics Canada.

¹¹ Ivan Berg, Education & Jobs: The Great Training Robbery, New York, Praeger, 1970.

¹² In Short Supply, p.92.

¹³ The Canada Manpower Training Program- A Policy Review, Ottawa, Employment and Immigration Canada, 1977, and In Short Supply, op. cit.

¹⁴ Federal-Provincial Training Agreement- Ontario Region, August, 1982.

¹⁵ These are very rough estimates. For a discussion of the vocational preparation of Ontario secondary school leavers see King, op. cit. At the post secondary level estimates are derived from Clark and Zsigmond, op. cit. In their survey 19% of university graduates took jobs unrelated to their education; another 39% entered jobs only partially related to the educational program. At the college level, the comparable percents were 11 and 22.

¹⁶ Most of these studies are reviewed in R.J. Adams "Training in Canadian Industry: Research Theory and Policy Implementations". Paper presented to the annual meeting of the Canadian Industrial Relations Association, 1981. See also Gordon Betcherman's Meeting Skills Requirements: Report of the Human Resources Survey, Ottawa, Economic Council of Canada, 1982.

¹⁷ Canada Manpower Training Program Annual Statistical Bulletin, Ottawa, Employment and Immigration Canada, 1982.

¹⁸ Lloyd Axworthy, Federal Occupational Skill Development Policy for the 1980's, Paper presented to the Federal-Provincial Conference on Skill Training, Vancouver, January, 1982. CEIC estimates that the number of new CTST trainees in 1982 exceeded 7,000.

¹⁹ Robertson, Nickerson Group Associates, Case Studies on Aspects of Training Upper Skilled Blue Collar Industrial Workers. Report prepared for the Department of Employment and Immigration, Ottawa, 1978.

²⁰ Comments on regulations in this report are based upon the training regulations in effect as of March, 1982 as they appeared in the CEIC Employment Manual. During the past year training regulations have been in a state of flux and some of those reported here may no longer be effective. (See for example, the letter to employers from Commissioner McBride on January 20, 1983). Since the regulations have been changing rapidly it was deemed sensible to deal with a single set as a basis for comparison and analysis.

²¹ Interviews with CEIC officials. See also Skills: The New National Training Act, Ottawa, Employment and Immigration, 1982.

²² Fulton Report, op. cit. p.65

²³ See also From the Adults Point of View, Toronto, Canadian Association of Adult Education, 1982.

²⁴ Draft Policy Statement of the Ministries of Education, Colleges and Universities on the Provision of Continuing Education through the Schools, Colleges and Universities, Toronto, April 21, 1982.

²⁵ Jean Commission, op. cit.

²⁶ Other studies which also have observed that National Training Policy seems to be more concerned with the unemployed than with the employed are In Short Supply, op. cit. and D.A. Dawson, R.T. Denton and B.O. Spencer. The Economics of Manpower Policy in the Ontario Context, Toronto, Ontario

Economic Council, 1982.

²⁷ See, for example, Survey of Quebec Engineers Continuing Education, Montreal, Ordre des Ingénieurs du Québec, 1979 and John Swan Continuing Education and Continuing Competence, Toronto, Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario, 1979.

²⁸ See end note "20".

²⁹ Several studies have come to the same conclusion as the Commission. See, for example, Randall Litchfield, "Managers Fall Short on Productivity", Toronto, Financial Times, February 21, 1983 and Competing in the Global Village, Toronto, Canadian Manufacturers Association, 1982.

³⁰ The BTSD program is specifically designed to upgrade math, reading, english and science while the other two programs attempt to improve life skills, work habits and other aspects of labour market behaviour.

³¹ CMTP— Annual Statistical Bulletin, op. cit.

³² The Dodge task force recommended that literacy training be combined with job training at the workplace but that recommendation does not seem to have carried through. Literacy upgrading is very rarely a part of industrial training contracts.

³³ For several articles on workplace-based general education, see, Sidney Pratt (ed.) English in the Workplace special edition of TESL Talk, Quarterly for teachers of English as a second Language, vol. 13, No. 4, Fall, 1982. In the same edition recent policy developments are reviewed by R.J. Adams "The Functionally Illiterate Worker and Public Policy." See also, John Cairns, The Illiteracy Problem in Canada, Canadian Commission for UNESCO, forthcoming.

³⁴ Gary Dickenson, "Adult Illiteracy in Canada and British Columbia", Pacific Association for Continuing Education Newsletter, vol. 9, No. 1, 1979.

³⁵ Alan M. Thomas, David S. Abbey and Dorothy MacKeracher Labour Education Program Second Evaluation: Years Three and Four, Toronto, OISE, 1982.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The most recent review of the German, French and Swedish systems is Luttringer and Pasquier, "Paid Educational Leave in Five European Countries". op. cit.

³⁸ Recent data on the increase in adult enrolment and the barriers adults desiring to return to school face are discussed in From the Adult's Point of View, op. cit.

³⁹ Provisions made in Canadian schemes are reviewed in R.J. Adams Training in Industry, Educational Leave and Leave for Union Studies in Ontario, report prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Toronto, 1980.

⁴⁰ A 2% guideline was derived from both the international and Canadian experience. For Canada see, I.A. Litvak & C.J. Maule Educational Leave Policies and Practices of Select Organizations in Canada, report prepared for the Commission of Inquiry on Educational Leave and Productivity, Ottawa, Labour Canada, 1979.

⁴¹ Luttringer and Pasquier, op. cit., came to the same conclusion.

⁴² Adams, Training in Industry, Educational Leave, etc., op. cit.

⁴³ For a detailed consideration of this scheme see R.J. Adams "Towards a More Competent Labour Force: A Training Levy Scheme for Canada". Industrial Relations (Laval), vol. 35, No. 3, 1980 and R.J. Adams, "Why Business Should Support a Training Levy Scheme", Worklife, Autumn, 1980.

⁴⁴ Gary S. Becker, Human Capital, 2nd ed., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1975.

⁴⁵ See end note "20".

⁴⁶ Comments made by employer representatives at the First National Occupational Outlook Conference, Ottawa, January 18, 19, 1983.

⁴⁷ See also the comments by T. Philip Adams, op. cit.

⁴⁸ See, for example, E.B. Harvey, Barriers to Employer Sponsored Training in Ontario, Toronto, Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities, 1980.

⁴⁹ On the basis of their European review Luttringer and Pasquier also come to the conclusion that bipartite or tripartite committees with power to make spending decisions are necessary if educational leave policy is to be successful.

⁵⁰ The British scheme came under a good deal of criticism during the 1970's (see the Dodge Report) and has recently been revised significantly. See, T.L. Johnston, "Manpower Policy and Industrial Relations in Britain" paper presented to the Industrial Relations Research Association, New York, December, 1982.

⁵¹ T.L. Johnston, Ibid.

⁵² Both the Dodge Task Force and Allmand Commission supported the RELP scheme in principle.

⁵³ Interviews with CEIC officials.

⁵⁴ CMT Annual Statistical Bulletin, op. cit.

⁵⁵ Even more time may be purchased under CTST. According to the latest formula CEIC may fund 2,560 hours of training over a three year period.

⁵⁶ Dodge Report and CMT- Policy Review, op. cit.

⁵⁷ See Sidney Pratt, op. cit.

⁵⁸ For a similar recommendation see the Dodge Report.

⁵⁹ See also O'Malley, op. cit. and Luttringer and Pasquier, op. cit.

⁶⁰ See end note "20".

⁶¹ This logic is also recommended by O'Malley, op. cit.

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